

Section 4: Regional Accountability System

In FY 2004, Region 8 will adopt an accountability process to determine progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of our unique regional priorities. We will rely on the established performance standards of the national reporting system for assessing the progress of our core programs. This will be supplemented as necessary with specific performance measures for our unique regional priorities. The process will include development of accountability measures and environmental indicators to reflect progress in meeting long-term goals and objectives; regular progress meetings with senior level managers and program directors; and an annual report on accomplishments toward meeting accountability measures and environmental indicators.

Assuring Accountability for Delegated Programs

Region 8 is working with multiple systems to ensure accountability. Two enforcement systems currently in use include the Uniform Enforcement Oversight System (UEOS, Region 8 developed) and the Use of Performance Measurement Data as a Management Tool (OECA developed). Another system is the state Performance Partnership Agreements (PPAs). The use of PPAs requires cooperative planning, review and feedback between the EPA and states.

In place since 1998, the UEOS has been recognized by the EPA Inspector General as a “Best Practice” in the area of state agency oversight (IG Report No. 2001-P-00013). Based on the results of formal program reviews, findings in preparing the joint end-of-year PPA report, and the annual UEOS evaluation, program-specific oversight plans are developed which describe baseline, targeted and enhanced oversight activities for the next year. Evaluation findings and planned oversight activities are discussed with the states during formal (e.g., mid-year meetings) and informal meetings, as well as during the joint preparation of the PPA end-of-year report. Resultant oversight activities and related work sharing, technical assistance, etc. are incorporated into PPA/SEAs. The annual PPA end-of-year review, which incorporates formal reviews conducted *during* the year evaluated, is the primary mechanism used to ensure that PPA/SEA commitments are being met and for ensuring the appropriate follow-up actions and oversight occurs. Less formal activities such as periodic meetings, phone calls, etc. are also used to monitor implementation of PPA/SEA commitments. Failure to address commitments may be responded to in a variety of ways. Examples of follow-up would include enhanced and more senior EPA-state discussions, targeted or enhanced oversight, work sharing, training and technical assistance. In especially serious instances, withholding state money or authorization for new rules may occur while a more comprehensive evaluation of the underlying problems may result.

The use of performance measurement data as a management tool shows how the Agency can use performance data to increase the effectiveness of strategies, programs and activities, as well as measure program integrity and accountability. By reviewing and analyzing performance measurement data, potential areas of concern can be identified. Follow-up discussions with EPA and states can identify the cause of potential problems and what can be done to address it now and in the future. Analysis of measurement data can be used to identify gaps and allow for more information to be collected to fill those gaps. In order to most effectively use program data as

measurements of performance, we will emphasize timely data entry and consistent information management. EPA and the states must adhere to deadlines established for data base entry and quality control so that assessment of past year performance can be done immediately following the end of that year.

In addition to the UEOS, the Region continues to work through PPAs to develop and refine indicators of state performance that reflect programmatic impacts on human health and environmental conditions. The Region is working with states on improving these metrics, including Core Performance Measures, so that they may inform decision-making and improve our ability to communicate about results.

During FY 2004, Region 8 will use the lessons learned from the UEOS and performance measurement tools to develop and implement oversight and accountability systems for all environmental programs. EPA will continue to work with states on the refinement and development of environmental indicators and measures for all delegated programs, particularly through the PPA process.